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## Introduction to a new open resource to help teachers support learners with anxiety in online environments

### Student Dissertation

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## THU: Introduction to a new open resource to help teachers support learners with anxiety in online environments (Claire Richardson)

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Cloud created by:



Claire Richardson

15 January 2018

### Multimedia abstract

Clicking on the above link should take you to a slideshow created with Microsoft's Sway. To adjust the speed of the slide progression, please click on the settings icon in the lower right hand side of the slide presentation.

An accessible version of this presentation can be accessed [here](#)

A text version, with references, can be found at the bottom of this cloud under the 'Extra Content' heading.

### Abstract

The prevalence of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression amongst students in Higher Education is high. In a 2016 survey carried out on university students within the United Kingdom, 27% of students reported mental problems of which 74% were anxiety related (Aronin and Smith, 2016). Levels of anxiety appear to be high even amongst students who do not report a mental health problem with only 19% of Higher Education students surveyed by the Office for National Statistics (2017) reporting low general levels of anxiety compared to 41% of the general UK population (cited in Neves and Hillman, 2017).

There is also an increased likelihood that students may be studying in an online environment. Digital activities are increasingly common within Higher Education in general (Newman and Beetham, 2017) and an increased number of university students studying entirely online in some countries such as the USA (Clinefelter and Aslanian, 2014 cited in University of Birmingham, n.d.). But despite the high probability that students with anxiety may be studying online, they often lack training in supporting students with mental health problems in Higher Education (Kendall, 2017).

To address this need, a new open education resource is being developed with the aim of helping teachers in Higher Education support learners with anxiety in online environments. As

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part of the 'inclusion theme' of the H818 online conference, an overview of the main features planned for this resource will be provided. These will include defining anxiety and background information on disability and the law. Issues relating to the disclosure of anxiety and confidentiality will be considered as well as barriers to participation and engagement that may exist in online environments for students with anxiety. There will be an emphasis on suggestions for adjustments to promote inclusion. Finally, the online resource will promote the opportunity to share best practice and to network with peers with common interests in supporting students with anxiety. During the presentation, there will also be an opportunity to provide suggestions to shape the direction of this resource.

## References

Aronin, S. and Smith, M. (2016) 'One in four students suffer from mental health problems', *YouGov News* [Online], Available at <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/09/quarter-britains-students-are-afflicted-mental-hea/> (Accessed 11 January 2018).

Kendall, L., 2017. Supporting students with disabilities within a UK university: Lecturer perspectives. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*. Available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14703297.2017.1299630> (Accessed 11 January 2018).

Neves, J. and Hillman, N. (2017). *Student Academic Experience Survey*. New York, Higher Education Academy. Available at: <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-Student-Academic-Experience-Survey-Final-Report.pdf> (Accessed 11 January 2018).

Newman, T. and Beetham, H. (2017). *Student digital experience tracker 2017: the voice of 22,000 UK learners*. JISC. Available at: <http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6662/1/Jiscdigitalstudenttracker2017.pdf> (Accessed 12 January 2018).

University of Birmingham (n.d.). *Growth of online degree programmes and how they will change learning* [Online]. Available at <https://hub.birmingham.ac.uk/news/online-degree-programmes-growth-impact-on-education> (Accessed 11 January 2018).

## Extra content

### Introducing a new online resource to help teachers support learners with anxiety.

by Dr Claire Richardson, Associate Lecturer (Science), Open University.

- ▶ An increasing number of students are now studying online (Clinefelter and Aslanian, 2014 cited in University of Birmingham, n.d.).
- ▶ Online courses are often preferred by disabled students including students with mental health difficulties.
- ▶ The incidence of mental health difficulties in university students within the UK is increasing with one in four UK university students reporting mental health problems in 2016 (Aronin and Smith, 2016).
  - ▶ Anxiety is one of the most commonly reported mental health problems.
  - ▶ Of students who report mental health problems, 74% have anxiety related difficulties (Aronin and Smith, 2016).



OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' Online Conference 2018

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- But teachers often lack guidance on how to support students with anxiety most effectively.
  - On Thursday, February 15th at 10:15 (GMT) I will be introducing a new online resource to help teachers support students with anxiety.
  - This presentation will be part of the H818 Online Conference 2018 (Ball, 2018).
- 
- I will be providing an overview of the main features of this resource.
    - This resource will aim to provide....
      - Background information on anxiety
      - Guidance on disability and the law
      - Consideration of disclosure and confidentiality.
      - The focus of the resource will be on removing barriers to educational inclusion for students with anxiety.
      - There will be opportunities to network and share best practice with peers online.
- 
- I hope to see you there!

## References

- Aronin, S. and Smith, M. (2016) 'One in four students suffer from mental health problems', *YouGov News* [Online], Available at <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/09/quarter-britains-students-are-afflicted-mental-hea/> (Accessed 11 January 2018).
- Ball, S. (2017) OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' Online Conference 2018 [Online]. Available at <http://cloudworks.ac.uk/cloudscape/view/3017> (Accessed 15 January 2018).
- University of Birmingham (n.d.). *Growth of online degree programmes and how they will change learning* [Online]. Available at <https://hub.birmingham.ac.uk/news/online-degree-programmes-growth-impact-on-education> (Accessed 11 January 2018).



[Claire Richardson](#)

19:57 on 15 January 2018

**Introducing a new online resource to help teachers support learners with anxiety.**

**by Dr Claire Richardson, Associate Lecturer (Science), Open University.**

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[Claire Richardson](#)

19:58 on 15 January 2018

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[Claire Richardson](#)

10:49 on 16 January 2018

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## Embedded Content

### Conference presentation slides

[Conference presentation slides](#)

[Accessible Alternative](#)

added by [Claire Richardson](#)

### YouTube video of conference presentation

[YouTube video of conference presentation](#)

added by [Claire Richardson](#)

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## Contribute

Discussion (27)

Links (0)

Academic References (0)



[Mr Jonathan G Brown](#)

3:04pm 18 January 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire,

This sounds like it could be a very powerful resource. Could you say a little more about how practitioners could tackle some of these barriers to inclusion? One I'm particularly interested in is how to address the potential feelings of isolation that online / distance study can engender. It seems much easier to address anxiety in learners when you're face to face!



[Mike Lyons](#)

12:05pm 19 January 2018 [Permalink](#)

I'd be interested to know how statistics about your topic. Are there regional differences? Is online anxiety related to gender?



**Steven Durant-Burgin**

12:49pm 19 January 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire,

As a sufferer of anxiety and depression, I am looking forward to your presentation as I may get some advice for me both as a student and a tutor. As most of my students are long-term unemployed, a few of them also suffer from anxiety, so this may become a tool that not only I can use, but my fellow tutors too,



**Claire Richardson**

2:01pm 23 January 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jonathan, Mike and Steven,

Thanks for asking these questions which have helped me to reflect on what to do in the conference presentation and with the overall project.

Jonathan- your question has helped me to appreciate that my topic is actually quite wide and might need narrowing. One direction would be to focus on supporting students with diagnosed anxiety disorders that are recognised by Higher Education Institutions as disabled students. Resources might then focus a bit more on legal aspects of supporting disabled students and links as to where to go for further support.

Another approach, might be more as I think you suggest, to think of anxiety as more of a spectrum and to recognise that anxiety may be an issue for numerous learners including those without a diagnosed mental health condition. The focus of the project would there for on best practice with respect to promoting confidence and inclusion, for example in forums and online tutorials. as well as when participating in MOOCs.

Mike- I will see if I can find this information out.

Steven- glad to hear this is of interest of you and I agree there are lots of parallels with your project.



**Mr Jonathan G Brown**

9:05pm 23 January 2018 [Permalink](#)

Both of those sound like good approaches, Claire, and I think narrowing can be really helpful - it's so easy for us to try and tackle everything for the conference! I'm perhaps more interested in the second area, but I am biased; anything that promotes confidence in forums, possibly resulting in increased participation, is something I want to know about!



**Katherine Hinchey**

2:57pm 4 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

I sometimes think we do ourselves a disservice in having the same words (depression and anxiety) for both medical and psychological conditions as well as more temporary situations of feeling blue or nervous. All are awful, but it seems to be an important difference nonetheless.



I'll be watching your conference with interest, to see if there is something in the OER that can be useful for workplace learning, where learners/employees are very much less likely to disclose anxiety of either flavor. With a lack of disclosure, are there still things I can do to help them while still being mindful of corporate objectives?



[Claire Richardson](#)

5:48pm 4 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

This comment is from Amy Marshall, from a duplicate cloud that I accidentally created. I have now marked the duplicate cloud as spam in hopes it will be deleted.

Thank you Amy for this comment:

,

[Amy MARSHALL](#)

7:32pm 23 January 2018 [Flag as spam](#) [Permalink](#)

I look forward to learning more about this resource and wonder what age range it is designed for. There are a lot more Primary age children (5-11) showing and being diagnosed with anxiety. Will this presentation be a walkthrough of the website?



[Claire Richardson](#)

8:54pm 4 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Katherine and Amy,

My context will focus on the Higher Education context, which is the one I work in, but there are likely to be elements that are relevant to workplace learning.

It is alarming that so many primary school aged children are diagnosed with anxiety, but that falls a little bit outside the scope of this resource.



[Mr Jonathan G Brown](#)

4:24pm 6 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire,

Hope the project is going well! You mentioned earlier that you might decide to narrow the focus of your topic to either the legal aspects of supporting diagnosed anxiety sufferers, or to looking at how to promote confidence and participation in forums - did you decide which to go for? As the success of my online course hinges on collaboration and participation, I'm very interested in your findings.

Jonathan



**Payungsak Kaenchan**

1:39am 7 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Once in my classroom, during an individual presentation, a student of mine walked in front of the class and he stood still for 2 minutes then walked back to his seat. Later he told me sometimes he felt like stabbing someone! -- to release his inside anger. And here that's why your topic is very interesting to me as I can relate. What I can see is that your project is a very powerful and useful add-on or element to any teacher education professional development or training. Coping with students with mental issues in my context is not at all a focus, either in or outside classrooms. And I am very interested to hear your approaches and suggestions for teachers in general about how to use digital resources to address this issue and to help our students.



**Denise McDonough**

8:52pm 10 February 2018 (Edited 8:54pm 10 February 2018) [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire,

Will you be using Sway for your presentation at all? It has been a struggle getting it to format correctly!

I am curious like Katherine and how this impacts all of us in professional life where we would not disclose our frailties for fear of prejudice whether intentional or unintentional bias. It is hard even when we try not to be biased not to be biased.

Recently I listened to a Great Course on Critical Thinking and he discussed how Confirmation Bias is so embedded in our thinking we are not aware of it if we don't challenge ourselves.



**Claire Richardson**

3:15pm 11 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Denise,

No, I won't be using Sway for the presentation and will be using powerpoint, hopefully with some slides of my resource.

I think your comment about disclosure links a little bit to universal design and how ideally we should design our resource without assumptions about whether those accessing it have disabilities, aiming to make our resources as accessible to all as possible from inception. Elements of a resource that improve access to students with clinical anxiety might also promote access to students with temporary feelings of nervousness or anxiety. So ideally I would like to have elements of my resource that help teachers promote confidence and participation online, as Jonathan suggests.

Thank you for your comment, Payungsak, I am pleased to hear that this kind of resource might be useful in your context.

[Denise McDonough](#)



6:09pm 13 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire,

I am very curious now about what online design/resources might make user more nervous or anxious and how to design sensitively as part of a larger accessibility context.

It hadn't crossed my mind and now seems obvious and it is down to your topic. Thank you!



[Denise McDonough](#)

1:02pm 15 February 2018 (Edited 1:05pm 15 February 2018) [Permalink](#)

Great presentation about a topic I was unaware of and feel much more informed - I know what I don't know! Your sharing your discovery in your own context and that the topic became too large offered great insight for my own reflection. It also engaged me to want to learn more about it. I hope there is an online resource. Is there a URL I missed? I especially found the scale activity at the end engaging and brought us into your presentation effectively. It was a great way to collect data for your project in real-time. Your genuine surprise was delightful.

Well done!



[Claire Richardson](#)

1:36pm 15 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Thanks very much Denise! I really appreciate you coming to the conference and participating even though it was not your presentation day. It makes such a difference to have a friendly audience!

I was very surprised to have people expressing a wide range of views about what the resource should focus on as based on our group discussions, I had picked up more of an interest in more support for promoting confidence in learners. When we opened the conference to our wider network, including those who are not currently studying H818, there seemed to be a wider range of views.

I have not made my resource public yet as I am still trying to populate it with information, You have encouraged me to make this resource public as soon as possible though.

Thanks again and I am looking forward to your presentation. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend in real time, but I will be listening to the recording with interest.



[Lesley Boyd](#)

5:22pm 15 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire

I really enjoyed your presentation this morning, thank you. I am a Year 2 PhD student in IET and was watching along with my colleague Helen, a fellow student. I also told Jake

Hilliard about your session, he is a Year 1 PhD and has been doing research on anxiety in online environments in OU modules. I think he's going to get in touch and send you a copy of his MRes dissertation from ORO, it might be useful. You and he might be able to swap some insights.

Your resource sounds and looks really useful and I look forward to hearing how it develops.

All the very best

Lesley



[Claire Richardson](#)

5:56pm 15 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Lesley,

Thanks very much for your message, I am pleased to hear that you enjoyed the conference. I am also very pleased to hear that there is more research going on in the area of anxiety in online environments at the OU as it seems to be a significant issue for many of our students. I would be grateful if Jake got in touch and would be very interested in reading his dissertation.

Thanks again!

Claire



[Katherine Hinchey](#)

6:26pm 15 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Claire, great job! The range of marks people made on the spectrum slide was fascinating and I think underscores the importance of your topic.



[Claire Richardson](#)

6:36pm 15 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Thanks very much Katherine and thank you for your helpful earlier comment on Cloudworks that really helped with my presentation.

Unfortunately I cannot attend the live conference on Saturday, but I will be looking forward to listening to the recording and hearing your presentation.



[Mike Lyons](#)

10:17pm 15 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Well done Claire. I agree with the several remarks that were made live during your presentation that it's an important topic that applies to almost all students. You seemed a bit surprised at the spectrum slide - what were you expecting? Where would you have put a mark?



[Claire Richardson](#)

8:25am 16 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Mike,

I was surprised by the response. As we seemed to have a shared interest in promoting collaboration and increasing confidence within our tutor group, I thought this might be a more popular area to focus on.

Also, I was a little bit nervous that no one would respond to the activity- if the tech wasn't working, if they didn't understand what I was asking or if they were completely uninterested in the presentation and had fallen asleep. So I was also relieved to see some lines appearing!

Unfortunately I cannot attend the live conference on Saturday, but I will be looking forward to listening to the recording and hearing your presentation. Good luck in the final preparation stages.



[Jake Hilliard](#)

9:58am 16 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire

Unfortunately I missed your presentation yesterday but it sounded like it was very interesting!

In my MRes dissertation I looked at student perceptions and experiences of anxiety in an assessed, online, collaborative project. My dissertation has been placed on ORO, here's the link:

<http://oro.open.ac.uk/52546/>

Jake



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

10:16am 16 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Hi Claire

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose.

Best wishes

Simon

- There is a new group on OU Yammer for mental health issues.
- Excellent interactive bit!
- Great presentation, will be interested in using this for my fellow tutors in teaching the unemployed as they have more severe anxiety issues
- very important work Claire - do you know (or have an inkling) as to whether fees increases anxiety? It strikes me that knowing you're building up debt might add to anxiety?
- Maybe there's a distinction between task-specific anxiety, so the normal student levels about a specific task, and the condition of anxiety attacks which can come over someone as a disability.
- Maybe case studies of different parts of the spectrum?



[Claire Richardson](#)

1:38pm 16 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Jake,

I had a quick look at your dissertation and it looks very relevant, thank you for the link.

I think some of my colleagues studying H818 would also find it interesting so I will bring it to their attention.

Pleased to hear that this is a topic getting more attention within the OU.

Claire



[Helen Dixon](#)

4:15pm 17 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Great presentation Claire - sorry I wasn't able to participate on Thursday. This is such an important topic as we are often unaware of how to address issues with students' mental health. I will look forward to your resource being made public - I wonder would it need adapting slightly for FE students? As they are often under 18, there may be different issues

Helen



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

11:38am 26 February 2018 [Permalink](#)

Many Congratulations Claire! Your presentation has been voted by delegates to be one of the most effective of the H818 Online Conference 2018 and you are officially one of our H818 Presentation Star Open Badge Winners! Please see how to Apply for your Badge here: <http://cloudworks.ac.uk/badge/view/33>

Well done!

Simon



[Munir Moosa Sadruddin](#)

7:06am 20 December 2018 [Permalink](#)

Dear Claire, I have been following you on Cloudwork and need your advice to make my poster more accessible. Can you visit and look at my poster and give me critical feedback:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DADK0Tp\\_IvQ/eOoFnTz88iMwGSm6LTKQLg/view](https://www.canva.com/design/DADK0Tp_IvQ/eOoFnTz88iMwGSm6LTKQLg/view)

Your review should address the following questions:

1. Does this poster (or element) deliver what you would expect from reading the description and title supplied? If not how is it different? (Description)
2. Is the topic addressed relevant to the conference theme indicated? If more than one theme is indicated which theme appears the best 'fit'? (Relevance)
3. Were there any difficulties navigating the poster or accessing any media elements? If so please describe your problem(s). (User experience)
4. What do you feel is the most significant contribution offered by this poster? For example what did you learn by viewing it? (Contribution)
5. What unanswered questions might someone have after viewing this poster? (Suggestions)

Awaiting for your kindness

Munir

## Contribute to the discussion

Please [log in](#) to post a comment. [Register here](#) if you haven't signed up yet.